

Reviews: Sad Sam Lucky

Unlimited Space of Mind

ZALA DOBOVŠEK, 30.4. 2012, Delo newspaper

The performance SAD SAM Lucky by the Croatian choreographer and performer Matija Ferlin belongs to the line of his solo performances with the common title "SAD SAM", a play of words which is each time upgraded with a suffix as a declaration of the performance's thematic frame. Though enigmatic as always, the word Lucky here entirely unambiguously refers to Srećko Kosovel, whose poetry Ferlin in collaboration with the dramaturge Goran Frčec confronts in a radically dispersed performative gesture and mainly – which is especially welcome – in the light of national distance and absence of the imparted attitude toward our key national poet. Perhaps it is precisely this (national) inorganic attitude which brings Ferlin to a fruitful and inspirational terrain unburdened of local immediacy but which nevertheless pushes him to some other extremes which are often evading ratio and canonized sophistication of poetry.

Ferlin reads Kosovel multidimensionally, blending with his hidden substances, while disclosing the poet's mind and his artistic contribution with a widened spectrum of performative word alloys, space, and movement. Kosovel's eerie but visionary insight is already taken into the starting point, is somewhat self-evident, therefore Ferlin delves into the depths of the poet's thoughts also through the chain of movement methods, which force into a corporeal tracing of expressionism and constructivism. In this complementary associational dance language, filled with ticks, spastic and unfinished movements oriented into the empty space, the performer resonates with the poetic source materials while continually and arbitrarily deconstructing his personality: stratification between him and the poetic object disappears, mechanicalness and ecstatic consciousness stir up two individualities – the figure on the stage becomes a symbol, an echo, an approximation, losing its concreteness, but is at the same time nevertheless metaphorically disturbing and piercing.

The first part of the event relies heavily on Kosovel's poetry. This exposition is gradually fused with the performer's personal statements and Ferlin carefully yet never definitively pulls out from under the poet's dominance, diluting his "immediate" presence more and more and clandestinely inscribing it into his intimate sphere. Kosovel's self-questioning ideas (religious, political, intimate, revolutionary) are nonviolently and in fragments introduced into the performer's existence, while his intelligent humour and a lucid ironical withdrawal frames the performance into an indescribable duplicity of gloominess and comicality – in a concluding motif of apocalypse created by Luka Prinčič's soundscape, full of shivers on multiple sensory levels. And since Kosovel is also or, better, foremost considered a notion of form and structure, the shrunken, dark, and rather empty space peels off another metaphor which is shown in the counter effect of the limited space.

If the square-shaped space covered with soot is understood as a metaphor for individual (physical) unfreedom, then beyond it, as if in a world of the mind, an infinite possibility of imagination, mental challenges, and a total dissolution of every rule is opened up. In SAD

SAM Lucky Matija Ferlin again demonstrates his exceptional performing talent and intellectual broad-mindedness, which is appropriately coded and delivered unpretentiously and with an indelible and unmistakable mark.

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While Srečko demands a liberated viewer as the listener who will get around between the lines of his sensibility, Matija Ferlin delivers freedom transitively, factually, folded between the word, object, body, and soul, locating the viewer's gaze precisely there. Without unfolding nihilomelancholy as black bile, pushing it out into the sphere of over-facticity with indelible and persistent circumlocution or movement expressivity, thus stripping it of the charge of the Real. Ferlin's performance could easily be labeled as a ludistic nihilomelancholy performative gesture. The empty space, marked stage, which bears only the traces of the moving body, which seem to grow out of movement-word and emerge from the correlations between object-table, alludes to the poet's legacy, which is inevitably time-resistant, creating a creatively potent dynamics of movement, indifferent toward translating the remains of the symbolic in the legacy into an all-embracing and self-conceited certainty, firmness, and stability of judgment from today's position. [...]

The sequence of scenes, images, transitions, movements, and illustrative elements avoids analogies between Kosovel-author, Ferlin-choreographer, and word-body. In the end of this unique polyphony, when the lights remain fixed on the audience, in the hollowness of dedication to the dead poet and thus in the absence of a narrative matrix and causal sequential dramaturgy that is commonly associated with a homage, the vivacity of an unbroken creative and freethinking spirit shines through. The latter has, as a matter of fact, long since stopped dealing with conquering, transgression, and the question of own position in the line of progress.

SAD SAM Lucky is a performance marked by Matija Ferlin's exceptional performing skills, while precision and a high level of authorship are evident in all the segments of the piece. The theme itself – Kosovel's poetry is, in its premonition of death, apocalyptic vision of Europe, criticism, and explosion of revolt, painfully up-to-date also today, in 2012. Ferlin's artistic and performing strength is unquestionable, while the integrity with which he dominates the text as well as emotive and dynamic shifts, which pass through performing *zero* to maximum performing intensity and then turn into explosive movement, are indeed fascinating. On top of this, what is actually most interesting is a remarkably solid dramaturgical structure by Goran Ferčec, which acts as a disciplining counterpoint for Ferlin's eruptive emotiveness – in Kosovel's words ... "explosion, wild devastation,

disharmony". Ultimately resulting in another one in the line of *equation of language and body* with which this powerful, virtuoso, and highly relevant performance is dealing with.

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Ivana Slunjski, Matica.hr, Vjenac, 3.5.2012

Projecting a distinct physicality even when still, Ferlin succeeds in evoking the force of Kosovel's verses, which in the search of the right form surely go beyond the level of language. Emotive and vulnerable, but at the same time distant and elusive, repeating successively the starting scene only to unwind it every time in another direction, Ferlin with the dramaturgical support by Goran Frčec finds the right amount between the gravity of the poetic word and persistence in a certain movement. The shifting between faith and despair, pleasure and memory, durability and impermanence is carefully framed by the set design (Mauricio Ferlin) – by the grayish dust which Ferlin rubs into the wooden floor, clothes, face, hair by moving across the stage. The *empty* scenography and the exposed working chair can be seen as yet another link between Kosovel and Ferlin, which as an empty piece of paper challenges the author to a creative but also critical reevaluation of reality.